ROMANCE

TWO LECTURES BY SIR WALTER RALEIGH

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ROMANCE

TWO LECTURES BY

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UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD, FELLOW OF
MERTON COLLEGE

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THE ORIGIN OF ROMANCE

The period of English political history which falls between Pitt's acceptance of office as prime minister, in 1783, and the passing of the Reform Bill, in 1832, is a period rich in character and event. The same period of fifty years is one of the most crowded epochs of our national literature. In 1783 William Blake produced his *Poetical Sketches,* and George Crabbe published *The Village.* In 1832 Scott died, not many months after the death of Goethe. Between these two dates a great company of English writers produced a literature of immense bulk, and of almost endless diversity of character. Yet one dominant strain in that literature has commonly been allowed to give a name to the whole period, and it is often called the Age of the Romantic Revival.

We do not name other notable periods of our literature in this fashion. The name itself

contains a theory, and so marks the rise of a new philosophical and aesthetic criticism. It attempts to describe as well as to name, and attaches significance not to kings, or great authors, but to the kind of writing which flourished conspicuously in that age. A less ambitious and much more secure name would have been the Age of George III; but this name has seldom been used, perhaps because the writers of his time who reverenced King George III were not very many in number. The danger of basing a name on a theory of literature is that the theory may very easily be superseded, or may prove to be inadequate, and then the name, having become immutable by the force of custom, is left standing, a monument of ancient error. The terminology of the sciences, which pretends to be exact and colourless, is always being reduced to emptiness by the progress of knowledge. The thing that struck the first observer is proved to be less important than he thought it. Scientific names, for all their air of learned universality, are merely fossilized impressions, stereotyped portraits of a single aspect. The decorous obscurity of the

ancient languages is used to conceal an immense diversity of principle. Mammal, amphibian, coleoptera, dicotyledon, cryptogam,—all these terms, which, if they were translated into the language of a peasant, would be seen to record very simple observations, yet do lend a kind of formal majesty to ignorance.

So it is with the vocabulary of literary criticism: the first use of a name, because the name was coined by someone who felt the need of it, is often striking and instructive; the impression is fresh and new. Then the freshness wears off it, and the name becomes an outworn print, a label that serves only to recall the memory of past travel. What was created for the needs of thought becomes a thrifty device, useful only to save thinking. The best way to restore the habit of thinking is to do away with the names. The word Romantic loses almost all its meaning and value when it is used to characterize whole periods of our literature. Landor and Crabbe belong to a Romantic era of poetry; Steele and Sterne wrote prose in an age which set before itself the Classic ideal. Yet there is hardly any distinctively Classical beauty in

English verse which cannot be exemplified from the poetry of Landor and Crabbe; and there are not very many characteristics of Romantic prose which find no illustration in the writings of Steele and Sterne. Nevertheless, the very name of romance has wielded such a power in human affairs, and has so habitually impressed the human imagination, that time is not misspent in exhibiting its historical bearings. These great vague words, invented to facilitate reference to whole centuries of human history —Middle Ages, Renaissance, Protestant Reformation, Revival of Romance—are very often invoked as if they were something ultimate, as if the names themselves were a sufficient explanation of all that they include. So an imperfect terminology is used to gain esteem for an artificial and rigid conception of things which were as fluid as life itself. The Renaissance, for instance, in its strict original meaning, is the name for that renewed study of the classical literatures which manifested itself throughout the chief countries of Europe in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. In Italy, where the movement had its origin, no

single conspicuous event can be used to date it. The traditions inherited from Greece and Rome had never lost their authority; but with the increase of wealth and leisure in the city republics they were renewed and strengthened. From being remnants and memories they became live models; Latin poetry was revived, and Italian poetry was disciplined by the ancient masters. But the Renaissance, when it reached the shores of England, so far from giving new life to the literature it found there, at first degraded it. It killed the splendid prose school of Malory and Berners, and prose did not run clear again for a century. It bewildered and confused the minds of poets, and blending itself with the national tradition, produced the rich lawlessness of the English sixteenth century. It was a strong tributary to the stream of our national literature; but the popular usage, which assigns all that is good in the English literature of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries to a mysterious event called the Renaissance, is merely absurd. Modern scholars, if they are forced to find a beginning for modern literature, would prefer to

date it from the wonderful outburst of vernacular poetry in the latter part of the twelfth century, and, if they must name a birthplace, would claim attention for the Court of King Henry II.

In some of its aspects, the Romantic revival may be exhibited as a natural consequence of the Renaissance. Classical scholarship at first scorned the vernacular literatures, and did all its work of criticism and imitation in the Latin tongue. By degrees the lesson was widened, and applied to the modern languages. Study; imitation in Latin; extension of classical usages and principles to modern literature,—these were the regular stages in the progress of the classical influence. When the poets of France and England, to name no others, had learned as much as they were able and willing to learn from the masters of Greece and Rome, the work of the Renaissance was done. By the middle of the eighteenth century there was no notable kind of Greek or Latin literature—historical, philosophical, poetical; epic, elegy, ode, satire—which had not worthy disciples and rivals in the literatures of France and England.

Nothing remained to do but to go further afield and seek for new masters. These might easily have been found among the poets and prophets of the East, and not a few notable writers of the time began to forage in that direction. But the East was too remote and strange, and its languages were too little known, for this attempt to be carried far; the imitation of Chinese and Persian models was practised chiefly by way of fantasy and joke. The study of the neglected and forgotten matter of mediaeval times, on the other hand, was undertaken by serious scholars. The progress of the mediaeval influence reproduced very exactly the successive phases of the Classical Renaissance. At first there was study; and books like Sainte Palaye's *Memoirs of Ancient Chivalry,* and Paul Henri Mallet's *Northern Antiquities,* enjoyed a European reputation. Then followed the period of forgery and imitation, the age of Ossian and Chatterton, Horace Walpole and Bishop Percy. Lastly, the poets enrolled themselves in the new school, and an original literature, suggested by the old, was created by Sir Wal-

ter Scott, Coleridge, and Keats. It was the temper of the antiquary and the sceptic, in the age of Gibbon and Hume, that begot the Romantic Revival; and the rebellion of the younger age against the spirit of the eighteenth century was the rebellion of a child against its parents.

It is not needful, nor indeed is it possible, to define Romance. In the mathematical sciences definitions are all-important, because with them the definition is the thing. When a mathematician asks you to describe a circle, he asks you to create one. But the man who asks you to describe a monkey is less exacting; he will be content if you mention some of the features that seem to you to distinguish a monkey from other animals. Such a description must needs be based on personal impressions and ideas; some features must be chosen as being more significant than the rest. In the history of literature there are only two really significant things—men, and books. To study the ascertained facts concerning men and books is to study biography and bibliography, two sciences which between them supply the only

competent and modest part of the history of literature. To discern the significance of men and books, to classify and explain them, is another matter. We have not, and we never shall have, a calculus sufficient for human life even at its weakest and poorest. Let him who conceives high hopes from the progress of knowledge and the pertinacity of thought tame and subdue his pride by considering, for a moment, the game of chess. That game is played with thirty-two pieces, of six different kinds, on a board of sixty-four squares. Each kind of piece has one allotted mode of action, which is further cramped by severe limitations of space. The conditions imposed upon the game are strict, uniform, and mechanical. Yet those who have made of chess a life-long study are ready to confess their complete ignorance of the fundamental merits of particular moves; one game does not resemble another; and from the most commonplace of developments there may spring up, on the sudden, wild romantic possibilities and situations that are like miracles. If these surprising flowers of fancy grow on the chess-board, how shall we set a limit to the

possibilities of human life, which is chess, with variety and uncertainty many million times increased? It is prudent, therefore, to say little of the laws which govern the course of human history, to avoid, except for pastime, the discussion of tendencies and movements, and to speak chiefly of men and books. If an author can be exhibited as the effect of certain causes (and I do not deny that some authors can plausibly be so exhibited) he loses his virtue as an author. He thought of himself as a cause, a surprising intruder upon the routine of the world, an original creator. I think that he is right, and that the profitable study of a man is the study which regards him as an oddity, not a quiddity.

A general statement of the law that governs literary history may perhaps be borrowed from the most unreasonable of the arts—the art of dress. One of the powerful rulers of men, and therefore of books, is Fashion, and the fluctuations of literary fashion make up a great part of literary history. If the history of a single fashion in dress could ever be written, it would illuminate the literary problem.

The motives at work are the same; thoughtful wearers of clothes, like thoughtful authors, are all trying to do something new, within the limits assigned by practical utility and social sympathy. Each desires to express himself and yet in that very act to win the admiration and liking of his fellows. The great object is to wear the weeds of humanity with a difference. Some authors, it is true, like timid or lazy dressers, desire only to conform to usage. But these, as M. Brunetière remarks in one of his historical essays, are precisely the authors who do not count. An author who respects himself is not content if his work is mistaken for another's, even if that other be one of the gods of his idolatry. He would rather write his own signature across faulty work than sink into a copyist of merit. This eternal temper of self-assertion, this spirit of invention, this determination to add something or alter something, is no doubt the principle of life. It questions accepted standards, and makes of reaction from the reigning fashion a permanent force in literature. The young want something to do; they will not be loyal subjects in a kingdom

where no land remains to be taken up, nor will they allow the praise of the dead to be the last word in criticism. Why should they paraphrase old verdicts?

The sway of Fashion often bears hardest on a good author just dead, when the generation that discovered him and acclaimed him begins to pass away. Then it is not what he did that attracts the notice of the younger sort, but what he left undone. Tennyson is discovered to be no great thinker. Pope, who, when his star was in the ascendant, was "Mr. Pope, the new Poet," has to submit to examination by the Headmaster of Winchester, who decides that he is not a poet, except in an inferior sense. Shakespeare is dragged to the bar by Thomas Rymer, who demonstrates, with what degree of critical ability is still disputed, but certainly in clear and vigorous English, that Shakespeare has no capacity for tragic writing. Dante is banished, by the critics of the Renaissance, into the Gothic darkness. So the pendulum of fashion swings to and fro, compelled, even in the shortest of its variable oscillations, to revisit the greatest writers, who are nearest

to the centre of rest. Wit and sense, which are raised by one age into the very essentials of good poetry, are denied the name of poetry by the next; sentiment, the virtue of one age, is the exploded vice of another; and Romance comes in and goes out with secular regularity.

The meaning of Romance will never come home to him who seeks for it in modern controversies. The name Romance is itself a memorial of the conquest of Europe by the Romans. They imposed their language on half Europe, and profoundly influenced the other half. The dialectical, provincial Latin, of various kinds, spoken by the conquered peoples, became the Romance speech; and Romance literature was the new literature which grew up among these peoples from the ninth century onwards,—or from an earlier time, if the fringe of Celtic peoples, who kept their language but felt the full influence of Christianity, be taken into the account. The chief thing to be noted concerning Romance literature is that it was a Christian literature, finding its background and inspiration in the ideas to which the Christian Church gave currency.

While Rome spread her conquests over Europe, at the very heart of her empire Christianity took root, and by slow process transformed that empire. During the Middle Ages the Bishops of Rome sat in the seat of the Roman Emperors. This startling change possessed Gibbon's imagination, and is the theme of his great work. But the whole of Gibbon's history was anticipated and condensed by Hobbes in a single sentence—"If a man considers the original of this great ecclesiastical dominion, he will easily perceive that the Papacy is no other than the ghost of the deceased Roman Empire, sitting crowned upon the grave thereof. For so did the Papacy start up on a sudden out of the ruins of that heathen power."

Here, then, is the answer to a question which at once suggests itself. How do we get this famous opposition between the older Latin literature and the literature of those countries which had inherited or accepted the Latin tradition? Why did not the Romans hand over their literature and teach it, as they handed over and taught their law? They did teach it in

their schools; grammar and rhetoric, two of the chief subjects of a liberal education, were purely literary studies, based on the work of the literary masters of Rome. Never was there an education so completely literary as the organized education of Rome and of her provinces. How came it that there was any breach between the old and the new?

A question of this kind, involving centuries of history, does not admit of a perfectly simple answer. It may be very reasonably maintained that in Rome education killed literature. A carefully organized, universal system of education, which takes for its material the work of great poets and orators, is certain to breed a whole army of slaves. The teachers, employed by the machine to expound ideas not their own, soon erect systems of pedantic dogma, under which the living part of literature is buried. The experience of ancient Rome is being repeated in the England of today. The officials responsible for education, whatever they may uneasily pretend, are forced by the necessities of their work to encourage uniformity, and national education becomes a warehouse of

second-hand goods, presided over by men who cheerfully explain the mind of Burke or of Shakespeare, adjusting the place of each, and balancing faults against merits. But Roman education throughout the Empire had further difficulties to encounter. To understand these it must be remembered what Latin literature was. The Latins, when we first discern them in the dim light of the past, were a small, strenuous, political people, with a passion for government and war. They first subdued Italy, and no very serious culture-problem resulted from that conquest. The Etruscans certainly contributed much to Latin civilization, but their separate history is lost. No one knows what the Etruscans thought. The Romans do not seem to have cared. They welded Italy together, and thereafter came into contact with the older, richer civilizations of the Mediterranean shores. The chief of these, in its influence, was the Greek civilization, as it had developed in that famous group of free city states, fostered by the sun and air, and addicted to life. In Athens, at the time of her glory, life was not a habit, but an experiment. Even

the conservative Romans were infected. They fell under the sway of Greek thought. When a practical man of business becomes intimate with an artist, he is never the same man again. The thought of that disinterested mode of life haunts his dreams. So Rome, though she had paid little regard to the other ancient peoples with whom she had had traffic and war, put herself to school to the Greeks. She accepted the Greek pantheon, renamed the Greek gods and goddesses, and translated and adopted Greek culture. The real Roman religion was a religion of the homestead, simple, pious, domestic, but they now added foreign ornaments. So also with literature; their own native literature was scanty and practical—laws and rustic proverbs—but they set themselves to produce a new literature, modelled on the Greek. Virgil followed Homer; Plautus copied Menander; and Roman literature took on that secondary and reminiscent character which it never lost. It was a literature of culture, not of creed. This people had so practical a genius that they could put the world in harness; for the decoration of the world they were willing to depend on foreign loans.

In so far as Latin literature was founded on the Greek, that is, in so far as it was a derivative and imitative literature, it was not very fit for missionary purposes. One people can give to another only what is its own. The Greek gods were useless for export. An example may be taken from the English rule in India. We can give to the peoples of India our own representative institutions. We can give them our own authors, Shakespeare, Burke, Macaulay. But we cannot give them Homer and Virgil, who nevertheless continue to play an appreciable part in training the English mind; and we can hardly give them Milton, whose subtlest beauties depend on the niceties of the Latin speech. The trial for Latin literature came when obscurely, in the purlieus and kennels of Rome, like a hidden fermentation, Christianity arose. The earliest Christians were for the most part illiterate; but when at last Christianity reached the high places of the government, and controlled the Empire, a problem of enormous difficulty presented itself for solution. The whole elaborate educational system of the Romans was founded

on the older literature and the older creeds. All education, law, and culture were pagan. How could the Christians be educated; and how, unless they were educated, could they appeal to the minds of educated men? So began a long struggle, which continued for many centuries, and swayed this way and that. Was Christianity to be founded barely on the Gospel precepts and on a way of life, or was it to seek to subdue the world by yielding to it? This, the religious problem, is the chief educational problem in recorded history. There were the usual parties; and the fiercest, on both sides, counselled no surrender. Tertullian, careful for the purity of the new religion, held it an unlawful thing for Christians to become teachers in the Roman schools. Later, in the reign of Julian the Apostate, an edict forbade Christians to teach in the schools, but this time for another reason, lest they should draw away the youth from the older faith. In the end the result was a practical compromise, arranged by certain ecclesiastical politicians, themselves lovers of letters, between the old world and the new. It was agreed, in effect, that the schools

should teach humane letters and mythology, leaving it to the Church to teach divine doctrine and the conduct of life. All later history bears the marks of this compromise. Here was the beginning of that distinction and apportionment between the secular and the sacred which is so much more conspicuous in Christian communities than ever it has been among the followers of other religions. Here also was the beginning of that strange mixture, familiar to all students of literature, whereby the Bible and Virgil are quoted as equal authorities, Plato is set over against St. Paul, the Sibyl confirms the words of David, and, when a youth of promise, destined for the Church, is drowned, St. Peter and a river-god are the chief mourners at his poetic obsequies. This mixture is not a fantasy of the Renaissance; it has been part and parcel, from the earliest times, of the tradition of the Christian church.

History is larger than morality; and a wise man will not attempt to pass judgment on those who found themselves in so unparalleled a position. A new religion, claiming an authority not of this world, prevailed in this world,

and was confronted with all the resources of civilization, inextricably entangled with the ancient pagan faiths. What was to be done? The Gospel precepts seemed to admit of no transaction. "They that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. But now they desire a better country, that is an heavenly." The material prosperity and social order which Law and Politics take such pains to preserve and increase are no part of their care. They are strangers and pilgrims in the country where they pitch their tent for a night. How dare they spend time on cherishing the painted veil called Life, when their desires are fixed on what it conceals? When Tacitus called the Christian religion "a deadly superstition," he spoke as a true Roman, a member of the race of Empire-builders. His subtle political instinct scented danger from those who looked with coldness on the business and desire of this world. The Christian faith, which presents no social difficulties while it is pro-

fessed here and there by a lonely saint or seer, is another thing when it becomes the formal creed of a nation. The Christians themselves knew that to cut themselves off from the country of their birth would have been a fatal choice, so far as this world is concerned. Their ultimate decision was to accept Roman civilization and Roman culture, and to add Christianity to it.

Then followed an age-long attempt to Christianize Latin literature, to supply believers with a new poetry, written in polished and accomplished verse, and inspired by Christian doctrine. Of those who attempted this task, Prudentius is perhaps the greatest name. The attempt could never have been very successful; those who write in Latin verse must submit to be judged, not by the truth of their teaching, but by the formal beauties of their prosody, and the wealth of their allusive learning. Even Milton, zealot though he be, is esteemed for his manner rather than for his matter. But the experiment was cut short by the barbarian invasions. When the Empire was invaded, St. Jerome and St. Augustine, Prudentius and

Symmachus, Claudian and Paulinus of Nola, were all alive. These men, in varying degrees, had compounded and blended the two elements, the pagan and the Christian. The two have been compounded ever since. The famous seventeenth century controversy concerning the fitness of sacred subjects for poetic treatment is but a repetition and an echo of that older and more vital difference. The two strains could never be perfectly reconciled, so that a certain impurity and confusion was bequeathed to modern European literature, not least to English literature. Ours is a great and various literature, but its rarest virtue is simplicity. Our best ballads and lyrics are filled with the matter of faith, but as often as we try the larger kinds of poetry, we inevitably pass over into reminiscence, learning, criticism, —in a word, culture.

The barbarians seized, or were granted, land; and settled down under their chiefs. They accepted Christianity, and made it into a warlike religion. They learned and "corrupted" the Latin language. In their dialects they had access neither to the literature of ancient Rome,

nor to the imitative scholarly Christian literature, poetry and homily, which competed with it. Latin continued to be the language of religion and law. It was full of terms and allusions which meant nothing to them. They knew something of government,—not of the old republic, but of their own men and estates. They believed wholly and simply in Christianity, especially the miraculous part of it. To them (as to all whom it has most profoundly influenced) it was not a philosophy, but a history of marvellous events. When, by the operation of society, their dialect had formed itself, a new literature, unlike anything that had flourished in ancient Rome, grew up among them. This was Romance, the great literary form of the Middle Ages. It was a sincere literature, expressive of their pride in arms and their simple religious faith. The early songs and ballads, chanted in the Romance speech, have all perished. From a later time there have come down to us the *Chansons de Geste,* narrative poems composed by the professional caste of poets to celebrate the deeds and adventures of the knights who fought the battles of Charlemagne against the Saracen invader.

The note of this Romance literature is that it was actual, modern, realistic, at a time when classical literature had become a remote convention of bookish culture. It was sung in the banqueting-hall, while Latin poetry was read in the cells of monks. It flourished enormously, and extended itself to all the matter of history and legend, to King Arthur, Theseus, Alexander, ancient heroes and warriors who were brought alive again in the likeness of knights and emperors. Its triumph was so complete, that its decadence followed swiftly. Like the creatures that live in the blood of man, literary forms and species commonly die of their own excess. Romances were multiplied, and imitated; professional poets, not content with marvels that had now become familiar, sought for a new sensation in extravagant language and incident. The tales became more and more sophisticated, elaborate, grotesque, and unreal, until, in the fourteenth century, a stout townsman, who ticketed bales in a custom-house, and was the best English poet of his time, found them ridiculous. In *Sir Thopas* Chaucer parodies the popular literature of his

day. Sir Thopas is a great reader of romances; he models himself on the heroes whose deeds possess his imagination, and scours the English countryside, seeking in vain for the fulfilment of his dreams of prowess.

So Romance declined; and by the end of the seventeenth century the fashion is completely reversed; the pendulum has swung back; now it is the literature inspired by the old classical models that is real, and handles actual human interests, while Romantic literature has become remote, fictitious, artificial. This does not mean that the men of the later seventeenth century believed in the gods and Achilles, but not in the saints and Arthur. It means that classical literature was found best to imitate for its form. The greater classical writers had described the life of man, as they saw it, in direct and simple language, carefully ordered by art. After a long apprenticeship of translation and imitation, modern writers adopted the old forms, and filled them with modern matter. The old mythology, when it was kept, was used allegorically and allusively. Common-sense, pointedly expressed, with some

traditional ornament and fable, became the matter of poetry.

A rough summary of this kind is enough to show how large a question is involved in the history of Romance. All literary history is a long record of the struggle between those two rival teachers of man—books, and the experience of life. Good books describe the world, and teach whole generations to interpret the world. Because they throw light on the life of man, they enjoy a vast esteem, and are set up in a position of authority. Then they generate other books; and literature, receding further and further from the source of truth, becomes bookish and conventional, until those who have been taught to see nature through the spectacles of books grow uneasy, and throw away the distorting glasses, to look at nature afresh with the naked eye. They also write books, it may be, and attract a crowd of imitators, who produce a literature no less servile than the literature it supplants.

This movement of the sincere and independent human mind is found in the great writers of all periods, and is called the Return to Na-

ture. It is seen in Pope no less than in Wordsworth; in *The Rape of the Lock* no less than in *Peter Bell.* Indeed the whole history of the mock-heroic, and the work of Tassoni, Boileau, and Pope, the three chief masters in that kind, was a reassertion of sincerity and nature against the stilted conventions of the late literary epic. The *Iliad* is the story of a quarrel. What do men really quarrel about? Is there any more distinctive mark of human quarrels than the eternal triviality of the immediate cause? The insulting removal of a memorial emblem from an Italian city; the shifting of a reading-desk from one position to another in a French church; the playful theft of a lock of hair by an amorous young English nobleman —these were enough, in point of fact, to set whole communities by the ears, and these are the events celebrated in *The Rape of the Bucket, The Rape of the Lectern, The Rape of the Lock.* How foolish it is to suppose that nature and truth are to be found in one school of poetry to the exclusion of another! The eternal virtues of literature are sincerity, clarity, breadth, force, and subtlety. They are to

be found, in diverse combinations, now here and now there. While the late Latin Christian poets were bound over to Latin models—to elegant reminiscences of a faded mythology and the tricks of a professional rhetoric—there arose a new school, intent on making literature real and modern. These were the Romance poets. If they pictured Theseus as a duke, and Jason as a wandering knight, it was because they thought of them as live men, and took means to make them live for the reader or listener. The realism of the early literature of the Middle Ages is perhaps best seen in old Irish. The monk bewails the lawlessness of his wandering thoughts, which run after dreams of beauty and pleasure during the hour of divine service. The hermit in the wood describes, with loving minuteness, the contents of his larder. Never was there a fresher or more spontaneous poetry than the poetry of this early Christian people. But it is not in the direct line of descent, for it was written in the Celtic speech of a people who did not achieve the government of Europe. The French romances inherited the throne, and passed through all the stages of

elaboration and decadence. They too, in their turn, became a professional rhetoric, false and tedious. When they ceased to be a true picture of life, they continued in esteem as a school of manners and deportment for the fantastic gallantry of a court. Yet through them all their Christian origin shines. Their very themes bear witness to the teaching of Christian asceticism and Christian idealism. The quest of a lady never seen; the temptations that present themselves to a wandering knight under the disguise of beauty and ease;—these, and many other familiar romantic plots borrow their inspiration from the same source. Not a few of the old fairy stories, preserved in folk-lore, are full of religious meaning—they are the Christian literature of the Dark Ages. Nor is it hard to discern the Christian origins of later Romantic poetry. Pope's morality has little enough of the religious character:

> Know then this truth (enough for Man to know),
> Virtue alone is Happiness below.

But Coleridge, when he moralizes, speaks the language of Christianity:

He prayeth best, who loveth best
All things both great and small;
For the dear God who loveth us
He made and loveth all.

The like contrast holds between Dryden and Shelley. It is perhaps hardly fair to take an example from Dryden's poems on religion; they are rational arguments on difficult topics, after this fashion:

In doubtful questions 'tis the safest way
To learn what unsuspected ancients say;
For 'tis not likely we should higher soar
In search of heaven than all the church before.

When Dryden writes in his most fervent and magnificent style, he writes like this:

I will not rake the Dunghill of thy Crimes,
For who would read thy Life that reads thy rhymes?
But of King *David's* Foes be this the Doom,
May all be like the Young-man *Absalom;*
And for my Foes may this their Blessing be,
To talk like *Doeg* and to write like Thee.

Nor is it fair to bring Shelley's lame satires into comparison with these splendors. When Shelley is inspired by his demon, this is how he writes:

To suffer woes which Hope thinks infinite;
To forgive wrongs darker than death or night;
To defy Power which seems omnipotent;
To love, and bear; to hope till Hope creates
From its own wreck the thing it contemplates;
Neither to change, nor falter, nor repent;
This, like thy glory, Titan, is to be
Good, great and joyous, beautiful and free;
This is alone Life, Joy, Empire and Victory.

Some of the great poets of the Romantic Revival took mediaeval literature for their model, but they did more than that. They returned to the cult of wild nature; they reintroduced the supernatural, which is a part of the nature of man; they described seas, and deserts, and mountains, and the emotions of the soul in loneliness. But so soon as it passed out of the hands of the greater poets, this revived Romance became as bookish as decadent Classicism, and ran into every kind of sentimental extravagance. Indeed revived Romance also became a school of manners, and by making a fashion and a code of rare emotions, debased the descriptive parts of the language. A description by any professional reporter of any Royal wedding is further from the truth to-day

than it was in the eighteenth century. The average writer is looser and more unprincipled.

The word Romance supplies no very valuable instrument of criticism even in regard to the great writers of the early nineteenth century. Wordsworth, like Defoe, drew straight from the life. Those who will may call him a Romantic. He told of adventures—the adventures of the mind. He did not write of Bacchus, Venus, and Apollo; neither did he concern himself with Merlin, Tristram, and the Lady of the Lake. He shunned what is derived from other books. His theme is man, nature, and human life. Scott, in rich and careless fashion, dealt in every kind of material that came his way. He described his own country and his own people with loving care, and he loved also the melodrama of historical fiction and supernatural legend. "His romance and antiquarianism," says Ruskin, "his knighthood and monkery, are all false, and he knows them to be false." Certainly, *The Heart of Midlothian* and *The Antiquary* are better than *Ivanhoe*. Scott's love for the knighthood and monkery was real, but it was playful. His heart was with Fielding.

There is nothing inconsistent in the best of the traditions of the two parties. The Classical school taught simplicity, directness, and modesty of speech. They are right: it is the way to tell a ghost story. The Romantic school taught a wider imaginative outlook and a more curious analysis of the human mind. They also are right: it is the way to investigate a case in the police courts. Both were cumbered, at times, with the dead things that they found in the books they loved. All literature, except the strongest and purest, is cumbered with useless matter—the conventional epithet, the grandiose phrase, the out-worn classical quotation, the self-conscious apology, the time-honored joke. But there are only two schools of literature—the good, and the bad. As for national legend, its growth is the same in all ages. The Greeks told tales of Achilles, the Romans of Aeneas, the French of Charlemagne, the British of Arthur. It is a part of the same process, and an expression of the same humanity.

I have tried to show that the Renaissance bears the same relation to classical literature as

the Revival of Romance bears to mediaeval literature, and that the whole history of the literature of Europe is an oscillation between Christian and Pagan ideals during that long and wavering process whereby Christianity was partially established as the creed and way of life of a group of diverse nations. The historical meaning of the word Romance is exact and easy to define. But in common usage the word means something much vaguer than this. It is a note, an atmosphere, a kind of feeling that is awakened not only by literature but by the behavior of men and the disposition of material objects. John Evelyn, the diarist, enjoys the reputation of having been the first to speak of a "romantic site,"—a phrase which leads the way to immeasurable possibilities in the application of the word. Accuracy in the definition of this larger meaning is unattainable; and would certainly be false, for the word has taken its meaning from centuries of usage by inaccurate thinkers. A whole cluster of feelings, impressions, and desires, dimly recognized as cognate, has grown around the word, which has now been a centre of critical discus-

sion and controversy for the better part of a century. Heine, in his dissertation on the Romantic School, takes the Christianity of the Middle Ages as his starting-point, and relates everything to that. Perhaps he makes too much of allegory and symbolism, which have always been dear to the church, but are not conspicuous in early Romance. Yet no one can go far astray who keeps in touch, as Heine does, with the facts of history. Goethe, impatient of the wistful intensities of youth, said that the Classical is health, and the Romantic disease. Much has been made, by many critics, of the statue and the picture, as types of ancient and modern art, the one complete in itself, the other suggesting more than it portrays. Mr. Walter Pater, borrowing a hint from a sentence of Bacon, finds the essence of Romance in the addition of strangeness to beauty, of curiosity to desire. It would be easy to multiply these epigrammatic statements, which are all not obscurely related to the fundamental changes wrought on the world by Christian ideas. No single formula can hope to describe and distinguish two eras, or define two tempers

of mind. If I had to choose a single characteristic of Romance as the most noteworthy, I think I should choose Distance, and should call Romance the magic of Distance. What is the most romantic line in Virgil? Surely it is the line which describes the ghosts, staying for waftage on the banks of the river, and stretching out their hands in passionate desire to the further shore:

Tendebantque manus ripae ulterioris amore.

Scott expounds the harmonizing power of distance in his *Journal,* where he describes the funeral of his friend Laidlaw's infant:

I saw the poor child's funeral from a distance. Ah, that Distance! What a magician for conjuring up scenes of joy or sorrow, smoothing all asperities, reconciling all incongruities, veiling all absurdness, softening every coarseness, doubling every effect by the influence of the imagination. A Scottish wedding should be seen at a distance; the gay band of the dancers just distinguished amid the elderly group of the spectators,—the glass held high, and the distant cheers as it is swallowed, should be only a sketch, not a finished Dutch picture, when it becomes brutal and boorish. Scotch psalmody, too, should be heard from a distance. The grunt and the snuffle, and the whine and the scream, should be all blended in that

deep and distant sound, which rising and falling like the Eolian harp, may have some title to be called the praise of our Maker. Even so the distant funeral: the few mourners on horseback with their plaids wrapped around them—the father heading the procession as they enter the river, and pointing out the ford by which his darling is to be carried on the last long road—not one of the subordinate figures in discord with the general tone of the incident—seeming just accessories, and no more—this *is* affecting.

The same idea is the subject of T. E. Brown's poem, *The Schooner:*

Just mark that schooner westward far at sea—
'Tis but an hour ago
When she was lying hoggish at the quay,
And men ran to and fro,
And tugged, and stamped, and shoved, and pushed and swore,
And ever and anon, with crapulous glee,
Grinned homage to viragoes on the shore.

. . . . . .

And now, behold! a shadow of repose
Upon a line of gray,
She sleeps, that transverse cuts the evening rose—
She sleeps, and dreams away,
Soft blended in a unity of rest
All jars, and strifes obscene, and turbulent throes,
'Neath the broad benediction of the West.

Shelley finds the suggestion of distance in beautiful music:

> Though the sound overpowers,
> Sing again, with thy sweet voice revealing
> A tone
> Of some world far from ours,
> Where music and moonlight and feeling
> Are one.

Wordsworth hears it in the song of the Highland Girl:

> Will no one tell me what she sings?—
> Perhaps the plaintive numbers flow
> For old, unhappy, far-off things,
> And battles long ago.

These quotations are enough to show what a width of view is given to modern Romantic poetry. Man is, in one sense, more truly seen in a wide setting of the mountains and the sea than close at hand in the street. But the romantic effect of distance may delude and conceal as well as glorify and liberate. The weakness of the modern Romantic poet is that he must keep himself aloof from life, that he may see it. He rejects the authority, and many of the pleasures, along with the duties, of society. He looks out from his window on the

men fighting in the plain, and sees them transfigured under the rays of the setting sun. He enjoys the battle, but not as the fighters enjoy it. He nurses himself in all the luxury of philosophic sensation. He does not help to bury the child, or to navigate the schooner, or to discover the Fortunate Islands. The business of every poet, it may be said, is vision, not action. But the epic poet holds his reader fast by strong moral bonds of sympathy with the actors in the poem. "I should have liked to do that" is what the reader says to himself. He is asked to think and feel as a man, not as a god.

The weakness of revived Romance found the most searching of its critics in Tennyson, who was fascinated, when he was shaping his own poetic career, by the picture and the past, yet could not feel satisfied with the purely aesthetic attitude of art to life. In poem after poem he returns to the question, Is poetry an escape from life? Must it lull the soul in a selfish security? The struggle that went on in his mind has left its mark on *The Lady of Shalott, The Palace of Art, The Voyage, The Vision of*

Sin, The Lotos-Eaters, and others of his poems. The Lady of Shalott lives secluded in her bower, where she weaves a magic web with gay colors. She has heard that a curse will fall on her if she looks out on the world and down to the city of Camelot. She sees the outer world only in a mirror, and

> In her web she still delights
> To weave the mirror's magic sights

—villages, market-girls, knights riding two and two, funerals, or pairs of lovers wandering by. At last she grows half-sick of seeing the world only in shadows and reflections. Then a sudden vivid experience breaks up this life of dream. Sir Lancelot rides past, in shining armor, singing as he rides. She leaves her magic web and mirror, and looks upon the real world.

> Out flew the web and floated wide;
> The mirror crack'd from side to side;
> "The curse is come upon me," cried
> The Lady of Shalott.

She goes into the world, and there she meets her death. The poem is not an allegory, but there is no mistaking the thought that gener-

ated it. The mirror and the web are the emblems of Romantic art. The feelings which stir the heart to action, which spring to meet the occasion or the object, are contrasted, in the poem, with the more pensive feelings which are excited by the sight of the object in a mirror, and the suggestions of color and design which are to be transferred to the embroidery. The mirror is a true and subtle symbol. When Shakespeare treated the same problem, he made King Richard II, the most romantically minded of all his kings, call for a mirror. The thing that it is easiest for a man to see in a mirror is himself; egotism in its many forms, self-pity, self-cultivation, self-esteem, dogs Romanticism like its shadow. The desire to be the spectator of your own life, to see yourself in all kinds of heroic and pathetic attitudes, is the motive-power of Romantic poetry in many of its later developments. Yet life must be arrested and falsified before the desire can be fulfilled. No one has ever seen himself in a mirror as he is seen by others. He cannot catch himself looking away, self-forgetful, intent on something outward; yet only when he

is in these attitudes does his true character show itself in his face. Nor, if he could so see himself, would he be a witness of the truth. The sensation of drowning, or of leading an assault in war, is very unlike the sentiment which is aroused in the spectator of either of these adventures. Romanticism, in its decline, confuses the sentiment with the sensation, and covets the enjoyment of life on the easy terms of a by-stander.

These faults and failings of late Romance are far enough removed from the simple heroism of the death of Roland in the pass of Roncesvalles. Later Romance is known everywhere by its derivative, secondary, consciously literary character. Yet it draws sometimes from the original source of inspiration, and attains, by devious ways, to poetic glories not inferior to the old.

IMITATION AND FORGERY

Romance is a perennial form of modern literature, and has passed through many phases. No period has been without it, though the esteem in which it is held has varied a good deal from age to age. English literature is strong in romance; there is something in the English temper which makes scepticism ungrateful to it, and disposes it to treat even dreams seriously. Chaucer, who laughed at the romantic writers of his day, yet gave a new lease of life to Romance in *Troilus and Cressida* and *The Knightes Tale*. Many of the poets of the seventeenth century chose romantic themes for their most serious work; if Davenant and Chamberlayne and others had been as successful as they were ambitious, they would have anticipated the Revival of Romance. Even in the age of Pope, the old romance subjects were still popular, though

they were celebrated in books which have long been forgotten. Everyone who has studied the Troy legend of the Middle Ages knows how great a share in the popularization of the legend belongs to the Sicilian lawyer, Guido delle Colonne, who summarized, in the dull style of a Latin chronicle, and without acknowledgment, the brilliant *Roman de Troie* which the French poet, Benoît de Sainte-More had written for Queen Eleanor of England. Guido's matter-of-fact compilation had an enormous vogue; Chaucer, Lydgate, and Shakespeare treated it as an authority; and Caxton translated it into English prose. Through all the changes of fashion Caxton's version continued in esteem; it was repeatedly revised and reissued; and, in the very age of Pope, found what was doubtless a large public under the title *The Destruction of Troy, In Three Books . . . With many Admirable Acts of Chivalry and Martial Prowess, effected by Valiant Knights, in the Defence and Love of distressed Ladies. The Thirteenth Edition, Corrected and much Amended.* London, *Printed for Eben. Tracey, at the Three Bibles*

on London-Bridge. 1708. In the underworld of literature Romance never died out. The Revival of Romance took its special character from a gradual and powerful reaction against Dryden and Pope and all those masters of Classical method who, during half a century, had legislated for English poetry. It began very early in the eighteenth century, long before the death of Pope. No sooner did a dynasty of moralists and satirists claim possession of the high places, and speak in the name of English literature, than all the other interests and kinds, which survived among the people, began to range themselves in opposition, and to assert their right to be heard. The supremacy of Dryden and Pope was the most despotic rule that English poetry has ever known, and the revolt was strong in proportion. Satire and morality very easily becomes tedious, especially when they are in close alliance. Despotism may be tempered by epigrams, and so become tolerable, but it is important that the epigrams should not be made by the despot. Outside the charmed circle of his friendships, Pope was ready enough to use his wit against any pretender.

The change began gradually, and in very innocent fashion. Poetry had been taught to be scholarly, self-conscious, experimental; and it showed its skill in half-playful imitations of the older English masters. Pope himself imitated Chaucer and Spenser in burlesque fashion. John Philips, in *The Splendid Shilling,* used Milton's heightened style to describe the distresses of an impecunious poet. William Shenstone in *The School-mistress,* parodied Spenser, yet the parody is in no way hostile, and betrays an almost sentimental admiration. Spenser, like Milton, never lost credit as a master, though his fame was obscured a little during the reign of Dryden. His style, it must be remembered, was archaic in his own time; it could not grow old, for it had never been young. Addison, in *An Account of the Greatest English Poets,* says that Spenser's verse

> Can charm an understanding age no more;
> The long-spun allegories fulsome grow,
> While the dull moral lies too plain below.

But the *Account* is a merely juvenile work; its dogma is not the sword of judgment, but

the shield of ignorance. "The character he gives of Spenser," said Pope, "is false; and I have heard him say that he never read Spenser till fifteen years after he wrote it." As for Pope himself, among the English poets Waller, Spenser, and Dryden were his childhood's favorites, in that order; and the year before his death he said to Spence—"I don't know how it is; there is something in Spenser that pleases one as strongly in one's old age as it did in one's youth. I read the Faerie Queene, when I was about twelve, with infinite delight; and I think it gave me as much when I read it over, about a year or two ago."

The lyrical Milton and the romantic Spenser found disciples among poets in the early half of the eighteenth century. Two of these disciples may be mentioned, both born about the year 1700, only twelve years later than Pope. John Dyer, the son of a solicitor in Wales, was bred to the law, but gave it up to study painting under Jonathan Richardson. His earlier and better poems were written while he wandered about South Wales in pursuit of his art. *Grongar Hill,* the most

notable of them, was published in 1726. Love of the country is what inspires his verses, which have a very winning simplicity, only touched here and there by the conventions deemed proper for poetry:

> Grass and flowers Quiet treads,
> On the meads and mountain-heads,
> Along with Pleasure, close ally'd,
> Ever by each other's side;
> And often, by the murmuring rill,
> Hears the thrush, while all is still,
> Within the groves of Grongar Hill.

The truth of his observation endeared him to Wordsworth; and his moral, when he finds a moral, is without violence:

> How close and small the hedges lie!
> What streaks of meadows cross the eye!
> A step methinks may pass the stream,
> So little distant dangers seem;
> So we mistake the Future's face,
> Ey'd thro' Hope's deluding glass;
> As yon summits soft and fair,
> Clad in colours of the air,
> Which, to those who journey near,
> Barren, and brown, and rough appear,
> Still we tread tir'd the same coarse way,
> The present's still a cloudy day.

It takes a good poet to strike a clear note, with no indecision, in the opening lines of his poem, as Dyer does in *The Country Walk:*

> I am resolv'd, this charming day,
> In the open fields to stray;
> And have no roof above my head
> But that whereon the Gods do tread.

His landscapes are delicately etched, and are loved for their own sake:

> And there behold a bloomy mead,
> A silver stream, a willow shade,
> Beneath the shade a fisher stand,
> Who, with the angle in his hand,
> Swings the nibbling fry to land.

It would be absurd to speak solemnly of Dyer's debt to Milton; he is an original poet; but the writer of the lines quoted above can never have been blind to the beauties of *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso.* His two arts brought him little material prosperity; in 1740 he took orders in the Church of England, and in his later years did harm to his fame by a long industrial poem called *The Fleece,* which has on it none of the dew that glistens on his youthful verses.

James Thomson, who won a great reputation in his own age, was the son of a parish minister in Scotland. He was educated in Edinburgh, and came to London to seek his fortune. All Thomson's work shows the new tendencies in poetry struggling with the accepted fashions. His language in *The Seasons* is habitually rhetorical and stilted, yet there is hardly a page without its vignettes of truth and beauty. When he forgets what he has learned in the Rhetoric class, and falls back on his own memories and likings, the poet in him reappears. In *The Castle of Indolence,* published just before his death in 1748, he imitates Spenser. One stanza of this poem is more famous than all the rest; it is pure and high romance:

> As when a shepherd of the Hebrid-Isles,
> Placed far amid the melancholy main,
> (Whether it be lone fancy him beguiles,
> Or that aërial beings sometimes deign
> To stand embodied to our senses plain),
> Sees on the naked hill, or valley low,
> The whilst in ocean Phoebus dips his wain,
> A vast assembly moving to and fro;
> Then all at once in air dissolves the wondrous show.

Many who are familiar with this simile have never been at the pains to remember, or enquire, what it illustrates. Indeed its appearance in the poem is almost startling, as if it were there for no purpose but to prophesy of the coming glories of English poetry. The visitors to the Castle of Indolence are met at the gate by the porter, who supplies them with dressing-gowns and slippers, wherein to take their ease. They then stroll off to various parts of the spacious grounds, and their disappearance is the occasion for this wonderful verse. Thomson cared no more than his readers for the application of the figure; what possessed him was his memory of the magic twilight on the west coast of Scotland.

Pope and Prior were metropolitan poets; it is worth noting that Dyer belonged to Wales, and Thomson to Scotland. It is even more significant that Dyer was by profession a painter, and that Thomson's poems were influenced by memories of the fashionable school of landscape painting. The development of Romantic poetry in the eighteenth century is inseparably associated with pictorial art, and especially with

the rise of landscape painting. Two great masters of the seventeenth century, Salvator Rosa and Claude Lorrain, are more important than all the rest. We have here to do not with the absolute merits of painting, nor with its technical beauties and subtleties, but with its effect on the popular imagination, which in this matter does not much differ from the poetic imagination. The landscapes of Salvator Rosa and Claude were made familiar to an enormous public by the process of engraving, and poetry followed where painting led. There are exquisite landscapes in the backgrounds of the great Italian masters; Leonardo, Titian, and others; but now the background became the picture, and the groups of figures were reduced to serve as incidents in a wider scheme. Exactly the same change, the same shift of the centre of interest, may be seen in Thomson's poetry compared with Spenser's. No doubt it would be difficult to balance the creditor and debtor account as between poetry and painting; the earlier pictorial landscapes borrowed some hints from the older romances; but in England, at least, landscapes of wild rocks,

and calm lakes, and feudal castles lit up by the glow of the setting sun were familiar before the reaction in poetry set in. Romance, in its modern development, is largely a question of background. A romantic love-affair might be defined as a love-affair in other than domestic surroundings. Who can use the word "romantic" with more authority than Coleridge? In *Kubla Khan,* a poem which some would choose as the high-water mark of English romantic poetry, he gets his effect from the description of a landscape combining the extremes of beauty and terror:

But oh! that deep romantic chasm which slanted
Down the green hill athwart a cedarn cover!
A savage place! as holy and enchanted
As e'er beneath a waning moon was haunted
By woman wailing for her demon lover!
And from this chasm, with ceaseless turmoil seething,
. . . . . .
It flung up momently the sacred river.
Five miles meandering with a mazy motion
Through wood and dale the sacred river ran,
Then reached the caverns measureless to man,
And sank in tumult to a lifeless ocean;
And 'mid this tumult Kubla heard from far
Ancestral voices prophesying war!

Romance demands scenery; and it should never be forgotten that the age of Pope, the age of symmetry and correctness in poetry, was an age when the taste for wild scenery in painting and in gardening was at its height If the house was set in order, the garden broke into a wilderness. Addison in the *Spectator* (No. 414) praises the new art of landscape gardening:

> There is generally in nature something more grand and august, than what we meet with in the curiosities of art. When, therefore, we see this imitated in any measure, it gives us a nobler and more exalted kind of pleasure, than what we receive from the nicer and more accurate productions of art. On this account our *English* gardens are not so entertaining to the fancy as those in *France* and *Italy*, where we see a larger extent of ground covered over with an agreeable mixture of garden and forest, which represent everywhere an artificial wildness, much more charming than that neatness and elegancy which we meet with in those of our own country.

Addison would have hesitated to apply this doctrine to poetry; indeed the orthodoxy of that age favored the highest possible contrast between the orderly works of man, and the gar-

den, which it chose to treat as the outpost of rebellious nature. Pope was a gardener as well as a poet, and his gardening was extravagantly romantic. He describes his ideal garden in the *Epistle to the Earl of Burlington:*

Let not each beauty everywhere be spy'd,
Where half the skill is decently to hide.
He gains all points, who pleasingly confounds,
Surprises, varies, and conceals the bounds.
Consult the genius of the place in all;
That tells the waters or to rise, or fall;
Or helps th' ambitious hill the heav'ns to scale,
Or scoops in circling theatres the vale;
Calls in the country, catches opening glades,
Joins willing woods, and varies shades from shades;
Now breaks, or now directs, th' intending lines;
Paints as you plant, and, as you work, designs.

Pope carried out these ideas as well as he could in his garden at Twickenham, where he attempted to compress every variety of scenic effect within the space of five acres, so that it became a kind of melodramatic peep-show. The professional landscape-gardeners worked on a larger scale; the two chief of them perhaps were Bridgeman, who invented the haha for the purpose of concealing the bounds; and Wil-

liam Kent, Pope's associate and contemporary, who disarranged old gardens, and designed illustrations for Spenser's *Faerie Queene.* Kent was an architect and bad painter, much favored by George I. Lord Chesterfield compares him to Apelles, who alone was permitted to paint the portrait of Alexander:

> Equal your varied wonders! save
> This difference we see,
> One would no other painter have—
> No other would have thee.

From 1716 onward he was much employed by the Earl of Burlington. He helped to lay out Stowe, in Buckinghamshire, with a fresh and surprising view at every turn; the wandering visitor was introduced, among other delights, to the Hermitage, the Temple of Venus, the Egyptian pyramid, St. Augustine's cave (artfully constructed of roots and moss), the Saxon Temple, the Temple of Bacchus, and Dido's cave. The craze for romantic gardening, with its illusions of distance, and its ruins and groves, persisted throughout the eighteenth century. Shenstone's garden at The Leasowes enjoyed a higher reputation even than his

poetry, and it is well known how he strained his slender means in the effort to outshine his neighbors. "In time," says Johnson, "his expenses brought clamours about him that overpowered the lamb's bleat and the linnet's song; and his groves were haunted by beings very different from fauns and fairies."

The chief of Kent's successors was Launcelot Brown, commonly called "Capability Brown" from his habit of murmuring to himself, as he gazed on a tract of land submitted for his diagnosis—"It has capabilities; it has capabilities." He laid out Kew and Blenheim. Gazing one day on one of his own made rivers, he exclaimed, with an artist's rapture,—"Thames! Thames! Thou wilt never forgive me." He certainly imposed himself upon his own time, and, so far, was a great man. "Mr. Brown," said Richard Owen Cambridge, "I very earnestly wish that I may die before you." "Why so?" said Brown with some surprise. "Because," said he, "I should like to see Heaven before you had improved it." Among the romantic writers who were bitten by the mania for picturesque improvement were Hor-

ace Walpole and even Sir Walter Scott. Everyone knows how Walpole bought from Mrs. Chevenix, the toy-shop woman, a little house called "Chopp'd Straw Hall" which he converted into the baronial splendors of Strawberry Hill; and how Scott transmitted a mean Tweedside farm, called Clarty Hole, into the less pretentious glories of Abbotsford.

After the practice came the theory. The painters and landscape-gardeners were followed by a school of philosophers, who expounded Taste and the laws of the Picturesque. Some extracts from the work of one of these, Thomas Whately, whose *Observations on Modern Gardening* appeared in 1770, will show to what excesses the whole nonsensical business had been carried. "In wild and romantic scenes," says Whately, "may be introduced a ruined stone bridge, of which some arches may be still standing, and the loss of those which are fallen may be supplied by a few planks, with a rail, thrown over the vacancy. It is a picturesque object: it suits the situation; and the antiquity of the passage, the care taken to keep it still open, though the original build-

ing is decayed, the apparent necessity which thence results for a communication, give it an imposing air of reality.' The context of this passages shows that the bridge leads nowhither. On the management of rocks Whately is a connoisseur. "Their most distinguished characters," he says, "are *dignity, terror,* and *fancy:* the expressions of all are constantly wild; and sometimes a rocky scene is only wild, without pretensions to any particular character." But ruins are what he likes best, and he recommends that they shall be constructed on the model of Tintern Abbey. They must be obvious ruins, much dilapidated, or the visitors will examine them too closely. "An appendage evidently more modern than the principal structure will sometimes corroborate the effect; the shed of a cottager amidst the remains of a temple, is a contrast both to the former and the present state of the building." It seems almost impossible that this should have been offered as serious advice; but it was the admired usage of the time. Whately's book was a recognized authority, and ran through several editions. He is also known as a Shakespeare critic, of no particular mark.

A more influential writer than Whately was William Gilpin, an industrious clergyman and schoolmaster, who spent his holidays wandering and sketching in the most approved parts of England, Wales and Scotland. His books on the Picturesque were long held in esteem. The earliest of them was entitled *Observations on the River Wye and several parts of South Wales . . . . relative chiefly to picturesque beauty* (1782). Others, which followed in steady succession, rendered a like service to the Lake district, the Highlands of Scotland, the New Forest, and the Isle of Wight. Those books taught the aesthetic appreciation of wild nature to a whole generation. It is a testimony to their influence that for a time they enslaved the youth of Wordsworth. In *The Prelude* he tells how, in early life, he misunderstood the teaching of Nature, not from insensibility, but from the presumption which applied to the impassioned life of Nature the "rules of mimic art." He calls this habit "a strong infection of the age," and tells how he too, for a time, was wont to compare scene with scene, and to pamper himself "with meagre novelties of

colour and proportion." In another passage he speaks of similar melodramatic errors, from conformity to book-notions, in his early study of poetry.

> The dignities of plain occurrence then
> Were tasteless, and truth's golden mean, a point,
> Where no sufficient pleasure could be found.

But imaginative power, and the humility which had been his in childhood, returned to him—

> I shook the habit off
> Entirely and for ever.

Yet in one curious respect Gilpin's amateur teaching did leave its mark on the history of English poetry. When Wordsworth and Coleridge chose the Wye and Tintern Abbey for their walking tour, they were probably determined in that direction by the fame of the scenery; and when they and Southey settled in the Lake district, it may be surmised that they felt other and stronger attractions than those that came from Wordsworth's early associations with the place. The Wye, Tintern Abbey, the English Lakes, the Scottish Highlands—these were the favored places of the

apostles of the picturesque, and have now become memorial places in our poetic history.

All these gardeners and aesthetic critics who busied themselves with wild nature were aiming at an ideal which had been expressed in many painted landscapes, and had been held up as the top of admiration by one of the greatest English poets. The influence of Milton on the new landscape interest must be held to be not less than the influence of his contemporaries, Salvator Rosa and Claude. His descriptions of Paradise did more than any painting to alter the whole practice of gardening. They are often appealed to, even by the technical gardeners. In garden-lore Milton was a convinced Romantic. He has two descriptions of the Garden of Eden; the slighter of the two occurs on the occasion of Raphael's entry, and merely resumes the earlier and fuller account:

Their glittering tents they passed, and now is come
Into the blissful field, through Groves of Myrrhe,
And flowering Odours, Cassia, Nard, and Balme;
A Wilderness of Sweets; for Nature here
Wantoned as in her prime and plaid at will
Her Virgin Fancies, pouring forth more sweet,
Wilde above rule or art; enormous bliss.

Coleridge has some remarks, in his *Table Talk,* on Milton's disregard of painting. There are only two pictures, he says, in Milton; Adam bending over the sleeping Eve, and the entrance of Dalilah, like a ship under full sail. Certainly the above lines are no picture; but they are more exciting than any clear delineation could be; they are full of scent, and air, and the emotions of ease and bliss. The other passage has more of architectural quality in it, and describes what first met Satan's gaze, when he entered the Garden and sat, perched like a cormorant, upon the Tree of Life.

The crisped Brooks
With mazie error under pendant shades
Ran Nectar, visiting each plant, and fed
Flours worthy of Paradise which not nice Art
In Beds and curious Knots, but Nature boon
Poured forth profuse on Hill and Dale and Plaine
Both where the morning sun first warmly smote
The open field, and where the unpierc't shade
Imbround the noontide Bowers: Thus was this place,
A happy rural seat of various view:
Groves whose rich Trees wept odorous Gumms and Balme,
Others whose fruit burnisht with Golden Rinde
Hung amiable, *Hesperian* Fables true,

If true, here onely, and of delicious taste:
Betwixt the Lawns, or level Downs, and Flocks
Grasing the tender herb, were interpos'd,
Or palmie hilloc, or the flourie lap
Of some irriguous Valley spread her store,
Flours of all hue, and without Thorn the Rose:
Another side, umbrageous Grots and Caves
Of coole recess, o'er which the mantling Vine
Layes forth her purple Grape, and gently creeps
Luxuriant; mean while murmuring waters fall
Down the slope hills, disperst, or in a Lake,
That to the fringed Bank with Myrtle crown'd,
Her chrystall mirror holds, unite their streams.
The Birds their quire apply; aires, vernal aires,
Breathing the smell of field and grove, attune
The trembling leaves, while Universal *Pan*
Knit with the *Graces* and the *Hours* in dance
Led on th' Eternal Spring.

Here is all the variety of hill and valley, wood and lawn, rock and meadow, waterfall and lake, rose and vine, which the landscape artists also loved to depict, and which, together with ruined temples and castles, unknown in Paradise, became the cherished ideal of landscape gardening. By the influence of *Paradise Lost* upon the gardeners, no less than by the influence of *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso* upon the poets, Milton may claim to be regarded as

one of the forefathers of the Romantic Revival. There is no need to distinguish carefully between poetry and painting in discussing their contributions to Romance. A great outcry was raised, in the last age, against literary criticism of pictures. But in this question we are concerned with this effect of pictures on the normal imagination, which is literary, which cares for story, and suggested action, and the whole chain of memories and desires that a picture may set in motion. Do not most of those who look at a romantic landscape imagine themselves wandering among the scenes that are portrayed? And are not men prone to admire in Nature what they have been taught by Art to notice? The landscape art of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries taught them to imagine themselves in lonely scenes, among old ruins or frowning rocks, by the light of sunrise or sunset, cast on gleaming lakes. These were the theatre of Romance; and the emotions awakened by scenes like these played an enormous part in the Revival. It was thus that poets were educated to find that exaltation in the terrors of mountainous regions which

Gray expressed when he said: "Not a precipice, not a torrent, not a cliff, but is pregnant with religion and poetry."

The weaker side of modern Romance, the play-acting and pretence that has always accompanied it, may be seen in the gardening mania. It was not enough to be a country gentleman; the position must be improved by the added elegances of a hermit's cell and an Egyptian pyramid. It is like children's play; the day is long, the affairs of our elders are tedious, we are tired of a life in which there is no danger and no hunger; let us pretend that we are monks, or ancient Romans. The mature imagination interprets the facts; this kind of imagination escapes from the facts into a world of make-believe, where the tyranny and cause and effect is no longer felt. It is not a hard word to call it childish; the imagination of these early Romantics had a child's weakness and a child's delightful confidence and zest.

The same play activity expressed itself in literature, where an orgy of imitation ushered in the real movement. The antiquarian beginnings of Romantic poetry may be well illus-

trated by the life and works of Thomas Warton. He passed his life as a resident Fellow of Trinity College, Oxford, and devoted his leisure, which was considerable, to the study of English poetry and Gothic architecture. He was not yet thirty when, in 1757, he was elected Professor of Poetry, a post which he held for ten years. During this time he planned a complete History of English Poetry, a task which Pope and Gray in turn had contemplated and abandoned. The historical interest which is so conspicuous in early Romanticism owed not a little, it may be remarked in passing, to the initiative of Pope, who must therefore be given a place in any full genealogy of the Romantic family. Warton's *History,* so far as it was completed, was published between 1774 and 1781, when he relaxed his efforts, and took up lesser tasks. In 1785 he was made Poet Laureate on the strength of his early poems and later scholarship. He died in 1790.

Warton's poems are a curious study. Spenser and Milton are his masters, and he is a docile pupil. His poetry is all derivative, and might be best described as imitation poetry. Christo-

pher North said of him that "the gods had made him poetical, but not a poet," a saying which contains the whole truth. He puts together a mosaic of phrases borrowed from his teachers, and frames them in a sentimental setting of his own. Here are some passages from *The Pleasures of Melancholy,* which, though he wrote it at the age of seventeen, does not differ in method or inspiration from the rest of his poetical work:

Beneath yon ruin'd abbey's moss-grown piles
Oft let me sit, at twilight hour of eve,
Where thro' some western window the pale moon
Pours her long-levell'd rule of streaming light;
While sullen sacred silence reigns around,
Save the lone screech-owl's note, who builds his bow'r
Amid the mould'ring caverns dark and damp,
Or the calm breeze, that rustles in the leaves
Of flaunting ivy, that with mantle green
Invests some wasted tow'r. . . .
Then, when the sullen shades of ev'ning close,
Where thro' the room a blindly-glimm'ring gleam
The dying embers scatter, far remote
From Mirth's mad shouts, that thro' th' illumin'd roof
Resound with festive echo, let me sit,
Blest with the lowly cricket's drowsy dirge. . . .
O come then, Melancholy, queen of thought!

O come with saintly look, and steadfast step,
From forth thy cave embower'd with mournful yew,
Where ever to the curfeu's solemn sound
List'ning thou sitt'st, and with thy cypress bind
Thy votary's hair, and seal him for thy son.

Melancholy seems not to have answered these advances. In later life Warton was a short, squat, red-faced man, fond of ale, and a cheerful talker, with a thick utterance, so that he gobbled like a turkey-cock. Some of his verses are cheerful. This is from the *Ode on the Approach of Summer:*

Haste thee, Nymph! and hand in hand
With thee lead a buxom band;
Bring fantastic-footed Joy,
With Sport, that yellow-tressed boy:
Leisure, that through the balmy sky
Chases a crimson butterfly.
Bring Health, that loves in early dawn
To meet the milk-maid on the lawn;
Bring Pleasure, rural nymph, and Peace,
Meek, cottage-loving shepherdess!

It is all like this, fluent and unnecessary. Perhaps no verses in English were ever made so exactly in the approved fashion of modern Latin verses. Warton writes pleasantly, his

cento of reminiscences is skilful, and his own epithets are sometimes happy, yet nothing comes of it. His work suggests the doubt whether any modern Latin verse, even the best, would deceive an intelligent citizen of ancient Rome.

The strange thing about the Romantic Revival is that an epidemic of this sort of imitation at last produced real poetry and real romance. The industrious simulation of the emotions begot the emotions simulated. Is there not a story told of a young officer who, having dressed himself in a sheet to frighten his fellows, was embarrassed by the company of a real ghost, bent on the same errand; and retired from the enterprise, leaving it wholly to the professional? That, at any rate, is very much what happened to the Romantic impersonators.

Another parallel may perhaps be found in the power of vulgarity to advance civilization. Take, for instance, the question of manners. Politeness is a codification of the impulses of a heart that is moved by good will and consideration for others. If the impulses are not

there, the politeness is so far unreal and insincere—a cheap varnish. Yet it is insisted on by society, and enforced by fear and fashion. If the forms are taught, the soul of them may be, and sometimes is, breathed in later. So this imitative and timid artifice, this conformity to opinions the ground and meaning of which is not fully understood, becomes a great engine of social progress. Imitation and forgery, which are a kind of literary vulgarity, were the school of Romanticism in its nonage. Some of the greater poets who passed this way went on to express things subtler and more profound than had found a voice in the poetry that they imitated.

The long debate on the so-called poems of Ossian is now ended. They are known to be a not very skilful forgery by James Macpherson. Yet their importance in literary history remains undiminished, and the life of Macpherson has a curious kind of pathos. He was the creature and victim of the Romantic movement, and was led, by almost insensible degrees, into supplying fraudulent evidence for the favorite Romantic theory that a truer and deeper

vein of poetry is to be found among primitive peoples. Collins's *Ode on the Popular Superstitions of the Highlands of Scotland* and Gray's *Bard* show the literary world prepared to put itself to school to Celtic tradition. Macpherson supplied it with a body of poetry which exactly fulfilled its expectations. The crucial date in his history is his meeting in 1759 with John Home, the author of the once famous tragedy of *Douglas*. In the summer of that year Home was drinking the waters at Moffat, and among the visitors assembled there found Thomas Graham, afterwards Lord Lynedoch, then a boy of ten, and his tutor, James Macpherson, a young Highlander, shy and ambitious, who had been educated at Aberdeen and Edinburgh, and had dabbled in verse. Home, full of the literary gossip of the hour, seized upon the opportunity to question Macpherson concerning the poems that were rumored to have survived among the Gaelic-speaking population of Scotland. In the light of what we now know it is not difficult to understand the genesis of this great European fraud. Macpherson was proud of his race, which he had

celebrated in an heroic poem called *The Highlander.* He had interested himself in Gaelic poetry, though his knowledge of the tongue was not good, and he had by him some fragments of genuine Gaelic poems. He was flattered by Home's appeal to him, and, feeling perhaps that the few and slight genuine poems which he could produce would hardly warrant the magnificence of his allusions to Gaelic literature, he forged a tale in poetic prose, called *The Death of Oscar,* and presented it to Home as a translation from the Gaelic. The poem was much admired, and Macpherson, unable now to retrace his steps without declaring himself a cheat, soon produced others from the same source. These were submitted to the literary society of Edinburgh, with the great Dr. Blair at its head, and were pronounced to be the wonder of the world. From this point onward, during a long and melancholy life, poor Macpherson was enslaved to the fraud which had its beginning in the shyness and vanity of his own character. He was bound now to forge or to fail; and no doubt the consciousness that it was his own work which

called forth such rapturous applause supported him in his labors and justified him to his own conscience. A subscription was easily raised in Edinburgh to enable him to travel and collect the remains of Celtic poetry. For a few months he perambulated the western highlands and islands, and returned to Edinburgh bringing with him *Fingal,* a complete epic poem in six books. This was followed by *Temora,* in eight books, also attributed to the great Gaelic bard Ossian; and the new Celtic fashion was established.

These poems had an immense success. Everyone knows how they influenced the youth of Goethe, and captured the imagination of Napoleon. It is less surprising that they enraptured the poet Gray, and were approved by the professor Blair, for they were exactly modelled on the practice and theory of these two critics. All the fashionable doctrine of that age concerning the history of poetry was borne out by these works. Poetry, so it was held, is to be found in its perfection only in primitive society, before it is overlaid by the complexities of modern civilization. Its

most perfect, and therefore its earliest, form, is the epic; and Dr. Blair must have been delighted to find that the laws of the epic, which he so often explained to his class in Edinburgh University, were minutely observed by the oldest of Scottish bards. He died without suspecting that the inspiration of the Ossianic poems had come partly from himself.

The belief that Celtic literature is essentially and eternally melancholy,— a belief which persisted down to the time of Matthew Arnold, also drew its strength from the poems of Ossian. Here again theory showed the way to practice. The melancholy of the Ossianic poems is not the melancholy of the Celt, but a melancholy compounded of many simples, and extracted from works that were held in high esteem in the eighteenth century—Young's *Night Thoughts,* Blair's *Grave,* Gray's *Bard,* and the soliloquies of Milton's Satan.

Macpherson was soon challenged, and his whole life was passed in a brawl of controversy. Two famous men dismissed him contemptuously. Dr. Johnson, who knew what honesty means among scholars, treated him as an impu-

dent impostor. Wordsworth, who knew what simplicity means in poetry, declared that all the imagery of the poems is false and spurious. But the whole question early became a national quarrel, and the honor of Scotland was involved in it. There are signs that Macpherson would gladly have escaped from the storm he had raised. Aided by his early literary success, he became a prosperous man, held a well-paid post at court, entered Parliament, and was pensioned by the government. Still the controversy persisted. He had found it easy to take up a haughty attitude towards those hostile critics who had doubted his good faith and had asked him to produce his Gaelic originals. But now the demand for the originals came from his champions and friends, who desired to place the fame of Scotland's oldest and greatest poet on a sure foundation. He wriggled on the hook, and more than once timidly hinted that the poems owed not a little to the poetic genius of the translator. But this half-hearted attempt to rob the great Ossian of a part of his fame stirred the Caledonian enthusiasts to a frenzy of indignation. At last,

when he was no longer able to restrain his supporters, the wretched Macpherson found no escape but one. In middle age, some twenty years after his first appearance on the poetic horizon, he sat down, with a heavy heart and an imperfect knowledge of the Gaelic tongue, to forge the originals. In 1807, eleven years after his death, these were at last published. The progress of genuine Celtic scholarship during the succeeding century did the rest; and the old blind bard rejoined the mists and vapors which were the inspiration of his Muse.*

The poems of Ossian are only one, though perhaps the most signal, instance of the forgeries which prevailed like an epidemic at the time of the Romantic Revival. Some of these, like Ireland's Shakespeare forgeries, were little better than cold-blooded mercenary frauds. Others, like Chatterton's Rowley Poems and Horace Walpole's *Castle of Otranto*, are full of the zest and delight of play-acting. Even Coleridge's *Ancient Mariner*, though it is free from the reproach of forgery, is touched by the

* For some of the facts in this account of Ossian I am indebted to Mr. J. S. Smart's fascinating book, *James Macpherson, an Episode in Literature* (David Nutt, 1905).

same spirit. The severe morality of scholarship had not yet been applied to mediaeval or modern matter. Scholars are the trustees of poets; but where this trust is undertaken by men who are poets themselves, there is usually a good deal of gaiety and exuberance in its performance.

I have now traced some of the neglected sources of revived Romance, and have shown how in this movement, more notably, perhaps, than in any other great movement in literature, it was not the supply which created the demand, but the demand which created the supply. The Romantic change was wrought, not by the energy of lonely pioneers, but by a shift in public taste. Readers of poetry knew what it was they wanted, even before they knew whether it existed. Writers were soon at hand to prove that it had existed in the past, and could still be made. The weakness of vague desire is felt everywhere in the origins of the change. Out of the weakness came strength; the tinsel Gothic castle of Walpole was enlarged to house the magnanimous soul of Scott; the Sorrows of Werther gave birth to *Faust.*

The weakness of the Romantic movement, its love of mere sensation and sentiment, is well exhibited in its effect upon the sane and strong mind of Keats. He was a pupil of the Romantics; and poetry, as he first conceived of it, seemed to open to him boundless fields of passive enjoyment. His early work shows the struggle between the delicious swoon of reverie and the growing pains of thought. His verse, in its beginnings, was crowded with "luxuries, bright, milky, soft, and rosy." He was a boy at the time of England's greatest naval glory, but he thinks more of Robin Hood than of Nelson. If Robin Hood could revisit the forest, says Keats,

> He would swear, for all his oaks
> Fallen beneath the dockyard strokes,
> Have rotted on the briny seas.

His use of a word like "rich," as Mr. Robert Bridges has remarked, is almost inhuman in its luxurious detachment from the human situation.

> Now more than ever seems it rich to die,
> To cease upon the midnight with no pain.

Or if thy mistress some rich anger shows,
Emprison her soft hand, and let her rave.

By his work in this kind Keats became the parent and founder of the Aesthetic School of poetry, which is more than half in love with easeful death, and seeks nothing so ardently as rest and escape from the world. The epilogue to the Aesthetic movement was written by William Morris before ever he broke out from those enchanted bowers:

So with this earthly paradise it is,
If ye will read aright, and pardon me
Who strive to build a shadowy isle of bliss
Midmost the beating of the steely sea,
Where tossed about all hearts of men must be,
Whose ravening monsters mighty men must slay,
Not the poor singer of an empty day.

Yet there is another side to the work of Keats, more wonderful in its broken promise than all the soft perfections of his tender Muse. He grew tired of imitation and ease. Weakness may exclude the world by forgetting it; only strength can conquer the world. What if this law be also the law of beauty? The thought inspires his last great attempt,

the fragment of *Hyperion*. Men have their dynasties and revolutions; but the immortals also, whom men worship, must change to live.

> So on our heels a fresh perfection treads,
> A power more strong in beauty.

And this power cannot be won by those who shirk the challenge of ugly facts.

> O folly! for to bear all naked truths,
> And to envisage circumstance, all calm,
> That is the top of sovereignty.

As if to enforce his thought by repetition, Keats made an allegorical framework for his revised version of the poem. There he exhibits himself as wandering among the delights of the garden of this life, and indulging himself to the point of drunkenness. Awaked from his swoon, he finds himself at the steps of the temple of fame. He is told he must climb or die. After an agony of struggle he mounts to the top, and has speech there with a veiled figure, who tells him that this temple is all that has been spared in the war between the rival houses of the Gods. When he asks why he

has been saved from death, the veiled figure makes reply:

"None can usurp this height," return'd that shade,
"But those to whom the miseries of the world
Are misery, and will not let them rest."
. . . . . .
"Are there not thousands in the world," said I,
Encourag'd by the sooth voice of the shade,
"Who love their fellows even to the death,
Who feel the giant agony of the world,
And more, like slaves to poor humanity,
Labour for mortal good? I sure should see
Other men here, but I am here alone."
"Those whom thou spakest of are no visionaries,"
Rejoined that voice; "they are no dreamers weak;
They seek no wonder but the human face,
No music but a happy-noted voice:
They come not here, they have no thought to come;
And thou art here, for thou art less than they.
What benefit canst thou do, or all thy tribe,
To the great world? Thou art a dreaming thing,
A fever of thyself: think of the earth;
What bliss, even in hope, is there for thee?
What haven? every creature hath its home,
Every sole man hath days of joy and pain,
Whether his labours be sublime or low—
The pain alone, the joy alone, distinct:
Only the dreamer venoms all his days,
Bearing more woe than all his sins deserve."

In this, which is almost his last deliberate utterance, Keats expresses his sense of the futility of romance, and seems to condemn poetry itself. A condemnation of the expression of profound thought in beautiful forms would come very ill from Keats, but this much he surely had learned, that poetry, the real high poetry, cannot be made out of dreams. The worst of dreams is that you cannot discipline them. Their tragedy is night-mare; their comedy is nonsense. Only what can stand severe discipline, and emerge the purer and stronger for it, is fit to endure. For all its sins of flatness and prosiness the Classical School has always taught discipline. No doubt it has sometimes trusted too absolutely to discipline, and has given us too much of the foot-rule and the tuning-fork. But one discipline, at least, poetry cannot afford to neglect—the discipline of facts and life. The poetry that can face this ordeal and survive it is rare. Some poets are tempted to avoid the experience and save the dream. Others, who were poets in their youth, undergo the experience and are beaten by it. But the poetry which can bear all naked truth and still keep its singing voice is the only immortal poetry.

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